from the Author

OBSERVATIONS

ON THE OFFICE OF A

FAITHFUL TEACHER,

AND ON THE DUTY OF AN

ATTENTIVE STUDENT OF MEDICINE.

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FAITHFUL TEACHER,

AND ON THE DUTY OF AN

ATTENTIVE STUDENT OF MEDICINE,

DELIVERED AS AN

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE TO THE INSTITUTIONS OF MEDICINE IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,

On the 29th of October 1823,

BY

ANDREW DUNCAN, *Sen.* M. D. *&* P.

FIRST PHYSICIAN TO THE KING FOR SCOTLAND.

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TO THE

MEDICAL AND PHYSICAL SOCIETIES
OF STUDENTS AT EDINBURGH,

ESTABLISHED BY CHARTERS FROM THE CROWN,

FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF MEDICAL PHILOSOPHY,

THESE OBSERVATIONS ARE INSCRIBED,

BY AN OLD FELLOW MEMBER,

WHO RECOLLECTS WITH GRATITUDE

THE INSTRUCTION HE DERIVED FROM THESE SOCIETIES,

AND WHO WILL EVER CONTINUE TO BE

THEIR SINCERE WELLWISHER,

ANDREW DUNCAN *sen.*

PREFACE.

At the desire of some of those who have heard my Observations on the Duty of an attentive Student of Medicine, delivered as a Public Lecture, and who wished to be able to read them in private, I have been induced to put them into the hands of the Publishers. It is hardly necessary for me to observe, that, at my advanced period of life, I can have no view of obtaining from this Publication either the slightest pecuniary emolument or additional reputation. But if it shall be productive of any benefit, either to future Teachers, or to future Students of Medicine, it will add something to my happiness in the evening of life. I shall, at least, derive from it, some

portion of that luxury which must ever arise, even from an attempt to do good. For, in my opinion, of all luxuries the most desirable is that which results from following the advice of a pious Poet,

> "To industry give work, to hunger food,
> And taste the luxury of doing good."
>
> *Duncan on Happiness.*

Edinburgh,
Nov. 1. 1823.

OBSERVATIONS

ON

THE OFFICE OF A FAITHFUL TEACHER,

AND ON

THE DUTY OF AN ATTENTIVE STUDENT, OF MEDICINE.

DELIVERED AS AN INTRODUCTORY LECTURE AT EDINBURGH.

- 5 FEB 93

GENTLEMEN,

I NOW meet you here, in the Eightieth year of my age, to enter on my official duty as a Teacher of Medicine, at Edinburgh, in the capacity of a Public Lecturer, for the fifty-fifth Winter Session. It has, I believe, fallen to the lot of few men to teach Medicine for so long a period, and with so great regularity, as I have done. For, during more than half a century I have now been engaged in that employment every year; and I

have never begun any course without being able to bring it to a complete termination according to the intended plan. Although I can by no means boast of total exemption from disease, yet the interruptions given to my Lectures by sickness have been very inconsiderable; and I have constantly made it a rule, to postpone every business which could admit of delay, to my duty as a Public Lecturer.

When I now meet you here, to enter on the present Course, at a very advanced period of life, I am not without hopes of being able to bring it to a happy conclusion. I must, however, candidly acknowledge, though it is commonly said, "Practice brings perfection," that, in some respects, I am now less fitted for the duties required from a Professor of Medicine than I was twenty or thirty years ago. I have still, indeed, the happiness of enjoying what may be considered as the greatest blessings of the human race, "*Mens sana in Corpore sano.*" But I am by no means exempted from a disease, to which every man who has lived many years must be subjected, the disease of old age. If, however, an increase of that disease should even altogether incapacitate

me from discharging my professorial duties in this room, I confidently trust that the present Course will not be deficient; for the Patrons of the University, not inattentive to long-continued exertions, have, for several years past, indulged me, by the appointment of an Assistant and Successor. And since the advancement of my Son, from being my Assistant, to the Chair of Materia Medica, they have, at my own request, nominated as my coadjutor in the Institutions of Medicine, Dr ALISON, whom I recommended to that situation, from a firm conviction of singular abilities. His assistance, when I shall find it necessary, may supply my defects; and I confidently trust, that, by our mutual exertions, the present Course will afford much useful instruction to those who may honour us by their attendance.

I am, indeed, by no means a stranger to the arduous nature of the task on which we are to enter. The Science of Medicine is no less extensive than intricate. It has for its object, the prevention, the removal, and the alleviation, of all the diseases to which the human race are subjected. It is not therefore to be expected that, from any one teacher, a just knowledge of it is to

be acquired. That it may be properly taught, the united labour of different teachers is essentially necessary. But at Schools of Medicine the most celebrated, and where many teachers of eminence have been assembled, the particular branches, referred to particular Professors, have been much varied; and while few divisions are without some advantages, it is difficult, perhaps, to say what division of Medicine is best entitled to preference.

Into any critical examination respecting the advantages or disadvantages of particular divisions adopted at celebrated Schools of Medicine, I do not now propose to enter. I shall only observe, that the branch of Medical Science which is allotted to us in the University of Edinburgh, has commonly been denominated the Theory, or Institutions of Medicine; that is, the First Principles of the Healing Art, or, in other words, the Philosophy of the Human Body. The Theory of Medicine, therefore, as it has commonly been called, should furnish a philosophical explanation of the general doctrines, of Health, of Disease, and of Remedy. It cannot therefore seem wonderful that this extensive subject should have been subdivided into different infe-

rior branches. Of all the subdivisions of the Institutions of Medicine, none, in modern Universities, has been more generally adopted than that of the illustrious BOERHAAVE, the most celebrated Teacher of Medicine during the period in which he lived. In BOERHAAVE's *Institutiones Medicæ*, the text-book for his Lectures on this subject, you will find it subdivided into five inferior branches: 1. *Physiologia*; 2. *Pathologia*; 3. *Semeiotica*; 4. *Hygiene*; and 5. *Therapeutica*. That all these fall to be comprehended under the Institutions, is indeed true; yet I am inclined to think, that some of them may be considered with much greater advantage when united than when disjoined; and, on this ground, I have long divided my Course of Lectures on the Institutions of Medicine into two branches only. The first I denominate Pathological Physiology, and the second General Therapeutics. The former is readily distinguishable from Anatomical Physiology, and the latter from special Therapeutics, or the Practice of Medicine strictly so called. To the first of these branches of the Institutions my attention will for this Winter-Session be solely confined: and I shall at

tempt, as far as I am able, to give a rational and philosophical explanation of the different organs and functions of the living body in a state of health, and of the different diseased states to which each particular organ or function of the body is subjected.

It is the business of the second great branch, the *Therapia generalis*, to explain the operation and use of the different classes into which medicines have been distributed, Emetics, Cathartics, and others; to point out those cautions which are to be observed in the employment of each class; and to demonstrate those morbid conditions of the system, by which each particular class is either indicated or contra-indicated. But the Lectures on this branch, for the present Winter, I shall entirely relinquish to my coadjutor Dr ALISON. I may only observe, that the ticket for the Institutions gives equal admission to the Lectures of both.

On the importance of many different particulars falling under the subject allotted to each of us, it is altogether unnecessary for me to make any remarks. That importance must be abundantly obvious to every intelligent Student. I shall only

farther say, that both my coadjutor and I will be much to blame, if those Students who bestow due attention on the Lectures here delivered, do not derive from them an adequate return for their labour.

But if the utility of a Course depends much on the subject which is taught, it depends also not a little on the method in which it is taught. That any Course of Medical Lectures may be productive of the full advantages to be derived from it, a suitable conduct is necessary, both on the part of the Lecturer himself, and his Hearers. For there can be no doubt that their combined exertions will afford mutual aid to each other. I trust, therefore, it will not be deemed improper, if, on the present occasion, I shall offer a few remarks, on the office of a faithful Teacher, and on the duty of an attentive Student, of Medicine. In speaking of the first of these subjects, without descending to particulars, I mean only to say a few words respecting those great lines of conduct which should be followed by every Medical Preceptor. On this I rather enter, as what I am now to say, is not less applicable to the means by which the Healing Art is to be taught, than to

those by which it is to be improved. And among my present hearers, I trust there are not a few who may hereafter be justly entitled to the appellation of Improvers of Medicine. For in this Art, notwithstanding the labours of ages, much yet remains to be discovered: and Genius, aided by Industry, can hardly fail to be productive of some good effect in the advancement of Medical Science.

In every branch of Medicine, two great objects may be pointed out as claiming particular attention: these are, a Knowledge of Facts, and a Knowledge of Principles. Certain established data must, in all Sciences, be the foundation of reasoning: and, in Medicine, a comprehensive knowledge of facts is, in a particular manner, necessary. For that knowledge, besides being the basis of general conclusions, often immediately leads to successful practice. Hence we may account for the ample store of medical facts with which the earliest Medical Libraries, as they may be styled, the Temples of Apollo, are said to have abounded.

It is not, however, every assertion, founded on authority seemingly unexceptionable, that can be

adopted as an established truth in Medicine. While, therefore, industry is requisite in the selection of facts, attention must also be bestowed in distinguishing truth from error. And he who is anxious to acquire the most useful knowledge of facts in Medicine, must derive that knowledge from various sources.

As the first, and, indeed, the principal source, from which a knowledge of important medical facts is to be obtained, I may point out, diligent examination of Medical Records, as transmitted to us in the writings of eminent Medical Authors. The most distinguished medical practitioners, in all ages, have been no less industrious in making observations, than free in communicating these observations to the public. And the store of valuable facts, for which we are indebted to Writers of modern date, as well as to the discerning Ancients, has now extended to a length almost incredible. Arduous, however, as the task of examining the writings of different medical authors may be, it is still necessary: and diligent, nay, indefatigable research, is particularly required of him, who either professes to be a teacher, or is ambitious to be an

improver of Medicine. In the examination of medical facts, it is indeed true, that every diligent inquirer will soon be distracted by numerous contradictions. It is therefore necessary, that, in this examination, the most positive assertions, as well as the most modest suggestions, should be canvassed and considered. And an assent is to be given only to such assertions as are corroborated by the concurring testimony of the most judicious observers, and to such as appear to unbiassed judgment to be the most probable. By careful and candid inquiry, thus conducted, much useful knowledge may be derived from the observation of medical writers, of every age, and of every country.

But this is by no means the only source from which a knowledge of important facts is to be derived by him who undertakes the office of being a Teacher, or who aims at the honour of being an improver of medicine. He must have recourse to a second, and a still more important source, careful observation of occurrences in the actual practice of medicine. It is not from the chimeras of imagination, or the dreams of a closet, that truth can be established, or error refuted. He who

must decide between contradictory assertions, should be able to appeal not only to books, but to Nature. In this way, his opportunities for accurate information, will be proportioned to the extent of the medical practice which he witnesses with due discernment. But it is not in every case, that the best and most extensive opportunities for information are accompanied with the most judicious decision. To derive, from witnessing the actual practice of Medicine, those advantages which it may afford, natural sagacity, improved by extensive reading, must be combined with careful observation. And it is particularly the duty of every candid medical inquirer, while he is at pains to procure proper opportunities for information, faithfully to employ these to the best advantage. By this means he will be enabled, not only to correct the errors, and to avoid the deceptions of others; but also to add to the common stock of useful knowledge, and thus he will enrich the treasury of useful medical facts.

In many cases, however, something farther is still wanting for ascertaining truth. Even the most careful observation, aided by witnessing the most extensive practice, will not, in every parti-

cular, afford complete satisfaction. This defect, however, may often be supplied from a third source, from Experiment, when that experiment is conducted with judicious attention.

There is, perhaps, no subject of inquiry which at present affords a more ample field for ingenuity and industry, in the way of experiment, than Medicine, in all its branches. This is, in a particular manner, demonstrated by the light which has lately been thrown on different physiological questions, by recent experiments. Many of these experiments have clearly demonstrated, not only how far even the wisest philosophers had in different particulars before erred, but how much yet remains to be learned.

The late discoveries in Chemistry have opened up to us new prospects, with regard to almost every constituent part of the animal body; particularly with respect to its various fluids. And if the conjectures, founded on these discoveries, which have lately been thrown out by BEDDOES, TROTTER, PATERSON and others, shall even, in part, be established, these discoveries will lead to most important improvements in the practice of Medicine; particularly in the cure of some dis-

eases, which have long been ranked among the *opprobria medicorum;* even in Phthisis Pulmonalis, one of the most certainly fatal.

If there be any truth in the conjectures to which I have alluded, many of what are now held to be the least doubtful pathological doctrines must undergo a very considerable change. And what may be esteemed a Humoral Pathology, as it was long styled in the schools of Medicine, will again in part be restored. That Humoral Pathology will, indeed, be very different from the humours of GALEN, of SYDENHAM, or even of BOERHAAVE. But it will demonstrate, that, to the condition of the fluids in the prevention and cure of diseases, much more attention is to be paid than was the opinion of HOFFMAN, HALLER, CULLEN and others, who referred almost all the phenomena of disease to affections of the nervous system.

There can, I think, be no doubt, that the action of the fluids on the solids of the living body is both immediate and considerable; and there can be as little doubt, that the fluids are subjected to morbid changes, from many different causes. Even the important vital function of Respiration, though

studied for ages, with particular attention, still affords an ample field for interesting experiments and discoveries. Till very lately, even the most able medical philosophers were almost entirely ignorant of some of the principal purposes which respiration serves in the animal economy; and many points still remain to be ascertained, particularly with regard to its influence on the fluids. Thus, according to some late experiments of SEGUIN, it is, with great probability, concluded to be an essential agent in the digestion of our food, or at least in its assimilation into blood: And by the changes which the blood undergoes at the lungs, there can now be little doubt that diseases may both be induced and cured.

But if experiments be still necessary for elucidating the important vital function of Respiration, they are equally necessary for ascertaining many points respecting the no less important vital function of Circulation. Although the simple but decisive experiments of HARVEY, clearly demonstrated the general course of the blood in the human body, which was before altogether unknown not only to the Greek, the Roman, and the Arabian Philosophers and Physicians, but also to the

most distinguished moderns, long after the revival of literature in Europe; yet, if some late experiments by COTHINNIUS in Italy, and by CARSON in Liverpool, be well founded, much respecting circulation still remains to be discovered; particularly with regard to circulation through the most important organ of the body, the Brain.

But of these different particulars I shall have occasion to speak, when I come to treat of the functions of Respiration and Circulation. At present, I may only observe, that the utility, and even the necessity of future experiments, on every branch of medical science, cannot be denied. And, indeed, there is perhaps, no branch of Philosophy, which, at present, stands more in need of illustration by experiment, than the Philosophy of the Human Body.

For properly conducting many experiments, indeed, much leisure, as well as sound judgment, is necessary. The greater part, therefore, of those physicians who are extensively engaged in actual practice, are incapable of allotting to experiment that time and attention which are indispensably requisite. Yet even amidst all the distractions of frequent avocations, much may be done; par-

ticularly in experiments respecting the most interesting part of the medical art, accurate observations of the real effects of remedies employed in the cure of diseases. By these, we may not only experimentally ascertain the effects of different articles of the Materia Medica on the human system, but also obtain illustration of the human economy, both in health and disease. And it may with justice be asserted, that experiments which would lead to useful conclusions, have been more frequently neglected, from want of industry, than from want of leisure. It is particularly the duty of those who either undertake the office of being Teachers of Medicine, or who aim at the honour of being improvers of that art, to cultivate this mode of inquiry themselves, and thus, by example, as well as by precept, to recommend the investigation of truth, by experiment, to the attention of others.

I have thus pointed out three sources from whence a knowledge of useful medical facts is to be obtained. These are, diligent examination of the writings of Medical Authors; careful observation of occurrences in actual Practice; and judicious and attentive Experiment. From these

sources, scrutinized with painful industry, he must derive his knowledge, who is ambitious of either improving the healing art, or of discharging the duties of a faithful Teacher of Medicine. That the Lecturer may communicate this knowledge to his hearers, these facts must be so arranged and digested, as to make a strong and lasting impression on their minds. Thus he will communicate to them that knowledge which they will afterwards find most essentially useful, when they engage in actual practice.

But, besides endeavouring to communicate an accurate and comprehensive knowledge of facts, it is also the duty of a Teacher of Medicine to instruct his hearers with respect to what have been denominated Medical Doctrines. He who would practise Medicine, not as a mere empiric, but upon rational principles, must found his practice on a knowledge of those causes on which diseases depend, and of their operation on the human body. This knowledge is to be drawn only from an acquaintance with those principles which regulate the functions of the body in a state of health. With regard to many of these functions, however, even the most acute reasoners on Physiology are

far from having arrived at certainty. Respecting many important functions, among different hypotheses which have been ably supported, it is difficult to determine which ought to be considered as the most probable. In such cases, it is the duty of the Teacher to state to his hearers, not only the opinion which he is himself inclined to consider as the most probable, but to give a clear and distinct account also of the opinions of others, when supported by plausible and ingenious reasoning. And, unawed by the authority of great names, he must deliver, without passion or prejudice, these arguments which to him appear either to corroborate or invalidate such doctrines.

By these means, the Lecturer may communicate to his hearers that knowledge which, unless by very great labour, they could not have obtained from the original sources of information, particularly from books. And in questions involved in doubt and obscurity, he may lead them, if not to a certain, at least to a probable conclusion. But when matters are very doubtful, it is to be expected of Teachers in particular, that they will still farther aim at the discovery of truth. And if they shall think, that their investigations have been attended with suc-

cess, it is their duty to communicate to their hearers any conjectures which are supported by probable arguments. To these conjectures, which may in some degree be considered as the children of his own invention, it may reasonably be concluded that any Lecturer will have a fond partiality; and when he treats of these subjects, even the most rigid critic can hardly refuse some indulgence to the enthusiasm of the Teacher. Still, however, it is his duty to deliver conclusions respecting his own hypotheses with becoming diffidence. Even when he is himself most satisfied respecting the truth of his conjectures, he should still recollect, that he is not only a party judge, but that he knows not what objections may be started against them by others.

He will indeed naturally wish, by endeavouring to remove such objections as have been stated to him, to give as full conviction as he can of his favourite opinions. But he ought not to forget that these are not the only subjects which it is his duty to teach: And that in the wide extended field which every branch of the medical science affords, much time should not be wasted on a few particulars. Nothing, therefore, is of more conse-

quence in any Teacher, than to restrain within proper bounds what he may say of those subjects most engaging to himself, and even perhaps most entertaining to his hearers. For although it should be the aim of every Lecturer to conduct his course on the most agreeable plan, yet it is still more his duty to conduct it upon that plan which is most instructive to his hearers.

After the observations which have been offered on the duty of a faithful Teacher of Medicine as a public Lecturer, I shall add only a few words respecting his conduct in private. It will be subservient to his own interest, to solve, as far as he is able, doubts and difficulties which may have occurred to any of his hearers, with respect to what he may have delivered. It is not indeed to be imagined, that on every private or anonymous application, he should alter or interrupt that plan of public instruction, which he has, after serious consideration, adopted as the best. For by such changes or interruptions, while he complies with the wishes of one individual, he may disappoint many. But the character of the public preceptor does not exclude that of the private instructor. And it ought to be the ambition of every Teacher

to hold a place in the affections as well as in the esteem of his hearers. As far, therefore, as other engagements will allow, it is his interest as well as his duty to bestow an attentive consideration on every doubt or difficulty proposed to him. He should ever demonstrate a ready disposition to give all the information he is able.

By such conduct in private as well as in public, he will most faithfully discharge the duty of that important office committed to him by those who become his pupils. But that any Teacher may be properly supported in the discharge of that duty, certain exertions and proper conduct are necessary also on the part of his Pupils. For besides every other circumstance, a due degree of attention from Students is necessary for giving vigour and spirit to the efforts of the Teacher. It is needless to mention, that regular attendance on Lectures is necessary on the part of every Student who wishes to profit by the prelections of any Teacher. No one can imagine that he can derive useful knowledge from the mere name of being the pupil of any Professor: Or that from the charm of having paid a fee, he can acquire instruction by miraculous inspiration. To profit

by the Lectures of any Professor, it is necessary that he should be heard, not only with regularity, but with due attention: For it is by regular attendance, and due attention alone, that the knowledge which his course may afford can be obtained.

But while regularity and attention are bestowed, it is farther necessary to guard against another error, perhaps little less pernicious than negligence or idleness. What I allude to, is the error of implicitly adopting the tenets and opinions of any one particular Teacher. It is a fault but too common, especially with those beginning the Study of Medicine at Public Seminaries, to be captivated with the doctrines of some favourite preceptor, on some fashionable subject. His tenets they are apt to consider as the standards of truth, and by these every other opinion must stand or fall.

Than this there cannot be a more pernicious error, or a more effectual bar to all real improvement. The truth of this assertion is fully evinced, by attending to the rise and downfal of many systems of Medicine prevailing at former periods. Many systems have at different periods been

fashionable in Medicine, which for a long time durst not be contradicted. Now, however, they are not only fully refuted, but even generally held in contempt. What has happened to these systems may happen to others. For no considerate man will allow himself to believe, that the present most fashionable Medical Doctrines are without imperfection or errors: And they will have the best chance of being held longer in esteem, if they be not implicitly adopted where they are faulty or erroneous.

The errors of any system can be avoided only by liberal inquiry, a mode of conducting Education which cannot be too strongly inculcated upon every Student of Medicine.

Liberal inquiry can only be accomplished by hearing and considering various opinions on the same subject with proper attention. And while there is no teacher without errors and deficiencies, so there is perhaps no one from whom something useful may not be learnt. It is by liberal and candid inquiry alone, that the true and useful of any system may be obtained, while its errors will be corrected and its imperfections supplied.

But while liberal inquiry on the part of the

Medical Student is necessary, for the investigation of truth, it is no less requisite, as the means of enabling him to appropriate to himself the knowledge he may derive from others. For those medical doctrines only can be by him usefully applied in the practice of Medicine, which he carries from the Schools, not as the tenet of a Professor, but as the result of deliberate judgment from himself.

For this purpose, different opinions must not only be heard, but considered with frequent and serious reflection. Arguments, both for and against particular doctrines, must be weighed with deliberate caution, and a determination formed with unbiassed candour. By these means, while mistakes are avoided and corrected, what is true and useful will be established on the most sure foundation.

In the accomplishment of these ends, much may be done by every attentive Student, both as an industrious reader of books, and as a diligent hearer of lectures. But for the attainment of medical knowledge, I must also beg leave to mention, that the City of Edinburgh affords another most useful mode of instruction. I mean those

Societies, or associations, for mutual improvement which have been here so long and so deservedly held in high esteem. Of these institutions, free and candid examination is the very basis. In them different opinions are considered and canvassed. The doubts of different hearers are stated and explained, and, by candid observation and reflection, are either confirmed or removed. In these exercises, latent genius is called forth, and judgment is matured by exertion; and while the powers of invention and understanding are improved, habits of industry are acquired. Activity is inspired by example, and merit is cherished by esteem. Thus, the pains of business are sweetened by the pleasures of emulation, and the exertions of every individual have an immediate tendency to the improvement of all.

That Student, however, who is anxious to reap the full advantages of such institutions, must not be merely the silent hearer of the papers or observations of others. Besides endeavouring to contribute to the general improvement, whether by the communication of facts or opinions, even the youngest Student should reflect, that it is of much more consequence to him to have a solution of his

own doubts, than merely to listen to debates respecting the doubts of others. He must be sensible, that a satisfactory solution of his doubts is to be expected only when they are stated in his own words, and as they strike himself. This must necessarily lead him to conclude, that the greatest improvement which he can derive from Medical Societies must depend on his taking an active share in their discussions.

But the questions debated in Medical Societies, and the topics discussed in Lectures, should soon afterwards become the subject of serious reflection with the attentive Student. He should weigh in his own mind what is there said against what has been before written by others. And for such private study, Edinburgh affords the best opportunities. For here Students can have free access to several very valuable collections of medical books. Exclusive of those Libraries which are appropriated solely to the use of the Students who have been admitted into the two Societies established by Royal Charters, the Public Library of the University is now provided with a very extensive collection of medical books, which every Student has an opportunity of con-

sulting and borrowing, under certain regulations. And for the use of the Students a catalogue of the medical books in the Library has lately been printed. This catalogue is a book so useful, that, in my opinion, no medical Student at the University of Edinburgh ought to want it; and, at the expence of a few shillings, he may obtain it from the Under-Librarian.

By such aids, those who possess due zeal for the acquisition of medical knowledge, may soon become acquainted with the most interesting medical facts and doctrines. They will, in no long time, appropriate to themselves the most valuable observations of others: And they will carry from the Schools of Medicine the best foundation for successful practice.

While, however, opportunities are thus afforded to Students for prosecuting Medical Education at Edinburgh with such advantages, the interesting nature of the profession of Medicine must urge upon the mind of every one of them, irresistible arguments for employing these opportunities to the uttermost. Without enlarging upon these arguments, it is sufficient to admonish the Medical Student, that the most important concerns of

his fellow creatures may soon be entrusted to his care: And according to the degree of knowledge which he shall acquire, during his studies at schools of Medicine, his best friends may either fall the unfortunate victims of his ignorance, or be preserved alive, to be the grateful patrons of his abilities.

That medical knowledge, it is his interest, as well as his duty, to endeavour to acquire without delay. For he ought to reflect, that whatever his future views of study may be, yet, from unforeseen and unavoidable accidents, the present session may perhaps be the only opportunity he shall have of acquiring, at Schools of Medicine, such knowledge of the principles and practice of his profession as will enable him to support the dignity of the healing art, and extend its blessings to mankind. To these considerations it is unnecessary to add more to stimulate every reflecting student, whose intention it is to dedicate himself to the practice of Medicine, to bestow unwearied exertions in the prosecution of his studies.

APPENDIX.

From the preceding Lecture, it appears that Dr Duncan still continues, at a very advanced period of life, daily to discharge his duties as a Public Professor in the University of Edinburgh. But, that he is not insensible of his being subjected to the disease of old age, may be inferred from his having lately relinquished the practice of Medicine, as a lucrative profession, by visiting Patients at their own houses, even in the City of Edinburgh. His resolution on this subject will be best understood from the two following Letters, which have appeared in *The Edinburgh Advertiser*, and other Newspapers.

Copy of a Letter to William Wood, Esq. President of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, from Dr Duncan, *sen.*

"Adam's Square, *Sept.* 27. 1823.

"Dear Sir,—Upon my return to Edinburgh yesterday, after an absence for about ten days in the county of Fife, I found upon my table an invitation from you, to the Annual Breakfast of the Royal College of Surgeons,

on the election of their President. I trust that my being more than thirty miles distant from Edinburgh, at the time when the Breakfast took place, will be held a sufficient excuse for not doing myself the honour of accepting that invitation, as I have done on many former occasions of similar Elections. Though now very old, I can still derive much happiness from good company; and I am not without hopes that I may yet be able to join your College at some future annual convivial meetings.

"Now, however, advanced to the Eightieth year of my age, it cannot seem wonderful that I should be desirous of retiring from employment, attended both with mental anxiety and bodily fatigue. Permit me, therefore, to take this opportunity of informing you, that I have now resolved to decline visiting any patients at their own houses; and, in future, to confine my medical practice to giving advice in writing respecting cases communicated to me in writing. Permit me, also, to request the favour, that you will take whatever mode you may think best of communicating my resolution to your fellow Members of the Royal College of Surgeons.

"Believe me to be, &c.

"ANDREW DUNCAN, *sen.*"

Extract of a Letter to the Rev. ANDREW BROWN, Professor of Rhetoric in the University of Edinburgh, from Dr DUNCAN, *sen.*

"ADAM'S SQUARE, *Oct.* 7. 1823.

"I send you inclosed, the two printed papers of which you wished to obtain copies. By my printed letter to

Mr Wood, you will see that I have now made myself an emeritus Physician, and that I no longer intend to visit patients, even in Edinburgh, with the view of obtaining fees. But I have great reason to be thankful, that I still retain sufficient vigour, both of mind and body, to be able to give gratuitously, my best advice as a Physician, to those with whom I am nearly connected.

"I do not therefore mean to discontinue visits to my friends, when they think I can be of any use to them. And persisting in the same plan which I have now followed for more than fifty years, when any particular friend, any clergyman in Edinburgh, any colleague in the University, or any student, thinks that gratuitous medical visits from me can be of any service to him, I shall most cheerfully give him my best advice at his own house; I shall think myself amply compensated by the satisfaction which must always result from exerting my best endeavours for the removal or alleviation of the diseases of my friends.

"I remain, dear Sir, &c.

"Andrew Duncan, *sen.*"

Although Dr Duncan has now retired from the toil and anxiety of medical practice in Edinburgh, yet he still retains such vigour of body as well as of mind, that, on the 17th of October 1823, the Eightieth anniversary of his birth-day, he walked with perfect ease to the top of Arthur's Seat, a high hill in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh. For many years past, it has been a practice with him, to walk to the top of that hill, on the morning

of May-day, when the English Villagers are, with great joy, hopping about the May-pole. On these occasions he has sometimes written there short poetical addresses, on remarkable occurrences which have taken place in the course of the year. These addresses have appeared in different newspapers, and have conveyed, with regard to Dr DUNCAN's state, both of mind and body, intelligence very agreeable to many of his friends at a distance. Among others, the DUKE of GORDON, himself an Octogenarian, who had occasion to correspond with Dr DUNCAN on the subject of his Grace's health, concludes one of his letters, with the following good wishes:

> " High on the top of Arthur's Seat reclin'd,
> Perfectly sound in body and in mind,
> May you, each May-day, that famed hill explore,
> And still write verses, even when past fourscore."

The fulfilment of this wish may now be said to be at least nearly accomplished; for Dr DUNCAN, on the Eightieth anniversary of his Birth-day, when, upon the top of Arthur's Seat, wrote the following Address to Old Age:

> " Welcome, Old Age, I'm glad to see your face,
> On this high hill, we meet with mutual grace;
> I've reached its summit, in my Eightieth year,
> In good Auld Reekie where is my compeer.
> My legs, thank God! are still for motion free,
> I'll stand by them, while they can stand by me;
> Together we'll jog on, while I have breath,
> Till to a better world I'm sent by Death."